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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - SYRIA - LEBANON KYRGYZSTAN
AND RUSSIA'S INFLUENCE UN REPORT ON THE ENVIRONMENT
PARIS - THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

1. SYRIA - LEBANON
2. KYRGYZSTAN AND RUSSIA'S INFLUENCE
3. UN REPORT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

EVERY FRONT PAGE AND NUMEROUS EDITORIALS ARE DEVOTED TO THE
LAUNCHING OF FRANCE'S DIGITAL LAND TELEVISION NETWORK, WHICH
WILL GIVE ACCESS TO 14 FREE CHANNELS, DOUBLE TODAY'S ACCESS.

MANY ARTICLES AND COLUMNS CONTINUE TO DEBATE THE PROS AND CONS
OF THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION. LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE CARRIES
A FRONT PAGE OP-ED BY FM BARNIER IN WHICH HE EXPLAINS WHY
VOTING 'NO' TO THE MAY 29 REFERENDUM DOES NOT MEAN A 'NO' VOTE
TO THE BOLKENSTEIN DIRECTIVE OR A 'NO' VOTE TO TURKEY'S
MEMBERSHIP TO THE EU.

LE MONDE'S EDITORIAL IS DEVOTED TO SYRIA, LEBANON AND THE UN
REPORT ON HARIRI'S DEATH. (SEE PART C)

CATHOLIC LA CROIX DEVOTES ITS LEAD STORY AND EDITORIAL TO
KYRGYZSTAN AND RUSSIA'S GRADUAL LOSS OF INFLUENCE. (SEE PART
C)

PAUL WOLFOWITZ'S NOMINATION TO THE WORLD BANK AND HIS TRIP TO
BRUSSELS ARE FEATURED IN A NUMBER OF ARTICLES AND INTERVIEWS.
IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO, PIERRE AVRIL WRITES: "ON THE
ROAD THAT WILL LEAD HIM TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE WORLD BANK,
WOLFOWITZ HAD THE WISDOM TO MAKE A STOP-OVER IN BRUSSELS.
WHILE HE DID LEAVE BEHIND HIS IMAGE OF NEO-CON, WOLFOWITZ DID
NOT BRING A FIRM ANSWER TO THE TWO REQUESTS MADE BY THE
EUROPEANS: THE CHOICE OF HIS DEPUTY AND THE NEED TO RESPECT
THE GOALS OF THE MILLENNIUM ACCOUNT."

IN POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR, FRANCE'S SOCIALIST
EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE PIERRE MOSCOVICI IS INTERVIEWED:
"WOLFOWITZ'S NEO-CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY IS NOT THE BEST
GUARANTEE FOR A FUTURE AS A DEVELOPMENT BANKER. THE CHOICE IS
A MISTAKE, FROM BUSH, BUT ALSO FROM CHIRAC AND ALL THOSE WHO
ARE ACCEPTING THIS NOMINATION. I WOULD HAVE LIKED FOR THE
FRENCH PRESIDENT AND THE EUROPEANS TO SHOW THEIR DISAGREEMENT
WITH THIS NOMINATION A LITTLE MORE ACUTELY. BEING ON THE ROAD
TO MENDING TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS DOES NOT EXCUSE SUCH
COMPLACENCY."

LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION ANNOUNCES ON ITS FRONT PAGE:
"WOLFOWITZ IS SINKING HIS CLAWS IN THE WORLD BANK." INSIDE,
THE ARTICLE IS TITLED "EUROPE, RESIGNED" AND IN AN INTERVIEW
WITH ALEX WILKS, AN EXPERT ON INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL
INSTITUTIONS, ONE CAN READ: "WHAT'S TO SAY THAT AFTER THE
INITIAL TOKENS GIVEN HERE AND THERE, WOLFOWITZ WON'T, IN THE
NAME OF THE WAR AGAINST TERROR, TAKE FROM CERTAIN SOCIAL
PROGRAMS TO FAVOR OTHERS MORE TO WASHINGTON'S LIKINGS, OR TIE
THE GRANTING OF CERTAIN FUNDS TO 'OBJECTIONABLE' VALUES.?"

THE UN REPORT ON THE ENVIRONMENT ELICITS A PESSIMISTIC
EDITORIAL COMMENTARY IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION BY PATRICK
SABATIER, WHO BELIEVES THAT "HUMANITY IS THREATENED WITH
BANKRUPTCY" IF WE DO NOT "ANSWER THE CHALLENGE OF SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT." (SEE PART C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

SYRIA - LEBANON

"THE WEIGHT OF SYRIA"

LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE IN ITS EDITORIAL (03/31): "WHILE THE
PEOPLE OF LEBANON DEMONSTRATED IN FAVOR OF FREEDOM AND
DEMOCRACY, THREE STREET BOMBINGS HIT THE CHRISTIAN SECTOR OF
BEIRUT LAST WEEK. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CONCLUSIONS OF A UN
INVESTIGATION INTO HARIRI'S ASSASSINATION, CALLING FOR AN
INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATION, ARE A FRONTAL ATTACK
ON LEBANON'S SYRIAN NEIGHBOR. SYRIA'S POLITICAL LEADERS ARE
CONVINCED THAT LEBANON AND SYRIA ARE TIED FOR LIFE. FOR BETTER

OR WORSE. INDEED IT SEEMS THAT DAMASCUS IS NO LONGER ABLE TO CONCEIVE OF LEBANON AS AN INDEPENDENT NATION. SYRIA HAS BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO ORDER THIS 'PROVINCE.' AMONG OTHER REASONS TO HAVE A TRUMP CARD IN THE REGION FOR ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND TO HAVE A BETTER HOLD OVER OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST. BAD HABITS DIE HARD. DAMASCUS HAS EXPORTED ITS FORM OF GOVERNMENT TO BEIRUT. LEBANON HAS BECOME A CLONE OF SYRIA. A PAGE NEEDS TO BE TURNED. LEBANON NEEDS TO LEARN ONCE AGAIN TO LIVE FREE OF ITS JEALOUS NEIGHBOR. THIS IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE. BUT THE TIME HAS COME FOR LEBANON TO BE FREED FROM ITS DICTATORIAL BIG BROTHER."

KYRGYZSTAN AND RUSSIA'S INFLUENCE

"RUSSIA'S LOST DIGNITY"
FRANCOIS ERNENWEIN IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (03/31): "AN IRREPRESSIBLE WIND OF DEMOCRACY SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN BLOWING IN GEORGIA, UKRAINE AND KYRGYZSTAN. WHILE SEEN FROM EUROPE THERE IS NO GOOD REASON TO CRY OVER THE LOSS OF UNITY WHICH RUSSIA HAS TRIED TO BUILD WITH THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT STATES, WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO GO TOO FAR IN HUMILIATING RUSSIA. RUSSIA'S LOSS OF PRESTIGE, FROM THE YUKOS AFFAIR TO CHECHNYA, IS THE KEY TO PUTIN'S UNACCEPTABLE HARD-LINE POLICY SINCE THE BEGINNING OF HIS SECOND TERM. HE IS HAUNTED BY NOSTALGIA FOR AUTHORITARIANISM AND CONTEMPT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. WHILE THESE ARE TRENDS WHICH ARE WELL-INGRAINED IN THE HISTORY OF THE KREMLIN, THEY ARE NOT A FATALITY. WE CAN FIGHT THEM. EUROPE CAN PLAY A ROLE HERE, AS IT DID IN THE PAST. FACED WITH AMERICA'S TEMPTATION TO FIT RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA INTO A TRADITIONAL TUG OF WAR FOR POWER, EUROPE CAN OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE, WITHOUT COMPLACENCY TOWARDS PUTIN'S METHODS BUT ALSO WITHOUT PROVOCATION. IT IS A QUESTION OF HELPING RUSSIA REGAIN SOME OF ITS LOST DIGNITY. IF RUSSIA IS TO FORGET ITS DREAMS OF DOMINATION, WE MUST OFFER IT A LOYAL PARTNERSHIP. A POLITICAL EUROPE WILL ALSO BE BUILT IN THE EAST."

UN REPORT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

"BANKRUPCY"
PATRICK SABATIER IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (03/31): "FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF LIFE ON EARTH, OUR PLANET'S LONGEVITY IS IN QUESTION. SO MANY WARNING ALARMS HAVE BEEN SOUNDED THROUGH SO MANY REPORTS, THAT THE DANGER LIES ALSO IN OUR IGNORING THEM, BECAUSE WE ARE UNABLE TO PROJECT OURSELVES INTO THE FUTURE. YET, WE CANNOT AFFORD THE LUXURY OF IGNORANCE. WE MUST ANSWER THE CHALLENGE OF DURABLE DEVELOPMENT. THE FIRST STEP IS ALWAYS THE HARDEST. WE MUST RADICALLY CHANGE OUR METHOD OF CALCULATING WEALTH AND ACCEPT THE NOTION THAT IT AND DEVELOPMENT CANNOT BE MEASURED ONLY IN DOLLARS PER INHABITANT. WE MUST FACTOR IN THE PRICE OF NATURE'S SERVICES TO MANKIND. NATURE'S DESTRUCTION HAS A PRICE, AND SOONER OR LATER WE WILL HAVE TO PAY IT. AT THE RATE WE ARE GOING TODAY, HUMANITY IS THREATENED WITH BANKRUPTCY."
LEACH